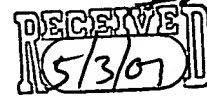


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ABSTRACT

A computer peripheral simplifies and safeguards the flow of monetary information onto the Internet. The invention relates to a computer peripheral as an input device for a personal computer or workstation. The peripheral simplifies and safeguards the flow of monetary transaction information onto the Internet, and includes a smart card reader for reading credit or debit card information from an information bearing smart credit and/or debit card; and, a secure link to the Internet. The capture of monetary transaction information for Internet transactions is facilitated and the monetary transaction is safeguarded by capture of the information on a transaction by transaction basis. An Internet based method of safeguarding and streamlining the entry of monetary transaction information from information bearing smart credit and/or debit cards is also provided. The method includes the steps of providing individuals making monetary transactions with a computer peripheral as an input device for a personal computer or workstation. The computer peripheral has a secure link to the Internet, and a magnetic stripe reader or smart card reader for reading information from the credit or debit cards, a communication link to a personal computer or work station for communicating the credit or debit card information to the personal computer or work station, and the computer or work station having means for communicating the card information to the Internet for further processing. The method includes encrypting or coding at least a portion of the card information entered by respective individuals prior to transmission of the card information to the personal computer or the work station.